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MISSOURI STATE PARKS BRING \$538 MILLION TO STATE'S ECONOMY

JEFFERSON CITY – Gov. Bob Holden said today that Missouri state parks and historic sites do more than provide scenic landscapes and cultural landmarks for people to enjoy. The state park system contributes \$538 million annually to the state's economy, according to a recent study released today by Gov. Bob Holden.

The University of Missouri-Columbia recently completed an economic impact study for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, which operates Missouri's 83 state parks and historic sites, including the Katy Trail. The study found that in 2002, visitors spent a total of \$410 million on trips to state parks and historic sites. When this amount is spent and re-spent in the economy, it brings the state park system's overall economic impact in the state to \$538 million annually. The total economic impact is based on any sale associated with the trip, including such items as travel expenses, lodging and groceries. The study also showed that state park visitor expenditures support 7,660 jobs and generate \$162 million in income.

"I knew we had an award-winning state park system, but this study also confirms that the beauty of our state parks is benefiting the state's economy," said Gov. Holden, who worked in a Missouri state park when he was in college.

According to the study, about 24 percent of the total \$410 million, or about \$100 million, spent by state park visitors came from out-of-state residents. This means that once the money is spent and re-spent in the economy, non-resident state park visitors generated \$140 million in total sales in Missouri's economy. Also, the out-of-state residents' expenditures support 2,013 jobs and generate \$43 million in income.

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“This is new money being brought into Missouri because of state parks and historic sites,” Holden said. “It also emphasizes what a major attraction our state park system is, not only to residents but to out-of-state tourists as well.”

With 83 state parks and historic sites located throughout the state, the economic benefit is also spread throughout the state. “Our state park system has facilities throughout Missouri, from Big Lake State Park in extreme northwest Missouri to Big Oak Tree State Park in the Bootheel,” explained Steve Mahfood, director of the Department of Natural Resources. “That means all areas of the state benefit, especially many rural areas. Everyone benefits, whether it is from someone buying gas to visit a state historic site or purchasing a new tent for a state park camping trip.”

“The study further confirms what Missouri tourism says about Missouri state parks,” said state Division of Tourism Director John Robinson. “They’re the best in the nation and they’re revenue producers.”

Approximately 18 million people visit Missouri state parks and historic sites every year. The state park system has been voted among the best in the nation four consecutive times in the National Gold Medal Award Program and studies show that 99 percent of visitors are satisfied with their visits.

For more information on Missouri state parks and historic sites, call the Department of Natural Resources toll free at 1-800-334-6946 (voice) or 1-800-379-2419 (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf), or visit the Web at www.mostateparks.com